

From the Editor

Pardon Me for Being an Alarmist, But...

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

Two articles in this issue deal with the possible health hazards of WiFi (wireless fidelity) technology, particularly in regard to children. In the interest of full disclosure, I must admit that I have never been an advocate of WiFi.

Fourteen years ago, I began using a computer that was capable of connecting to the Internet. At that time, the main offices of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America were in a building twenty yards from where my office was—and still is—although the Association has since moved. The Association tech person suggested that I use WiFi to connect to the Internet. He explained that a transmitter in the main building would beam a high frequency radio signal to a router in my office, which would then beam the signal to my computer.

I am not a scientist by training, but something about all those radio waves bouncing constantly around my office didn't appeal to me. A little inner voice said, "No."

"What is the alternative?" I asked the tech fellow. "Connect by a cable into the phone jack near your desk," he replied. "Let's go cable," I said. The tech guy looked surprised but agreed.

Four years ago, I was at a conference in Hawaii with Dr. Michaela Glöckler, head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum. I asked her advice about a close friend who was recovering from a serious illness. Dr. Glöckler strongly recommended two things to support my friend's immune system: One—do eurythmy every day! Two—stay out of WiFi environments!

Today, WiFi is nearly ubiquitous—in schools, libraries, offices, homes, coffee shops, outdoor public places, airports, buses, and trains. In what is, in terms of human history, less than the blink of an eye, we have become dependent on being able, anywhere and anytime, to check our email, read the news, shop online, update our Facebook page, and view the latest grumpy cat video. And in the process, we have created living and work environments that typically are permeated by radio frequency radiation (RFR) twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Although Waldorf schools diverge in many areas from the mainstream culture, on the issue of WiFi they seem to have gone very much with the flow. This past February, at a conference on technology in education held at Rudolf Steiner College, Dr. Glöckler was the keynote speaker and spoke several times about WiFi technology and its possible dangers. One morning, with over 300 Waldorf teachers and administrators in the hall, I asked, "How many people are at schools with a WiFi system?" Almost everyone in the audience raised a hand. Then I asked, "Was there at the installation of WiFi, or has there been since, any discussion about possible adverse effects and health concerns?" About five people raised a hand.

WiFi is part of a larger phenomenon known as *electrosmog*. Electrosmog includes the ambient pulsed radio frequency radiation generated by WiFi routers, cell phone towers, cell phones, cordless phones, and even "baby watchers." The term refers also to the electromagnetic fields (EMFs) generated by power lines, electrical motors and appliances, including computers, and by electrical cables and wires. Unlike air pollution or noise pollution, electrosmog cannot normally be perceived by the five senses. One needs, ironically, an electrical device, to detect and measure its presence.

There is a lot of controversy about the possible negative effects of WiFi, cell phones, and related devices. The people who are concerned about and bring up the topic can be an annoyance to those who do not perceive any possible danger and who do not appreciate a major source of convenience in their lives being called into question. However, we parents and educators, for our own sake and for the sake of our children, should inform ourselves about this new presence in our daily lives. At the very least, we should be aware that we are all subjects in a massive, unplanned, largely involuntary biological research project, and no one will know the results for a long time. ☺

